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The Struggle Ain't Over Yet "Womens Suffrage Movement" Formative Years

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and **Susan B. Anthony** were born into a world ruled entirely by men. By the time their lives were over, they had changed for the better the lives of women and men everywhere.

The nineteenth amendment, regarding female suffrage, was proposed by Congress on June 14, 1919. The amendment could not become law without the ratification of a minimum thirty-six of the forty-eight states. By the summer of 1920, thirty-five of the forty-eight states had ratified the amendment, with a further four states called upon to hold legislative voting sessions on the issue. Three of the states refused to call special sessions, but Tennessee agreed to do so.

After months of political maneuvering it all came down to one state.....TENNESSEE.

No one was sure what would happen, legislators who had seemed solidly for woman's suffrage, suddenly fell silent, fled to the opposition or simply Got out of Town. On August 18, 1920 Roses filled the Tennessee House Chamber.....Yellow for Suffrage Red for those who opposed it.

Believing they had enough votes the Anti's moved to table the amendment. But they had miscounted and it was a tie 48 to 48.....Suffrage would stay alive, at least long enough to be voted upon.

Harry Thomas Burn Sr. from McMinn county Tennessee at age 22, was the youngest man in the Tennessee State Legislature. He was slight of stature, clean cut and looked the role of a rural country boy awe struck by the big city and fast dealings of politics.

Most of his constituents were against the amendment and he came into the legislative chamber that morning with a Red Rose in his button hole.....but he also carried folded in his pocket a letter from his mother....**Mrs. J.L. Burn** of Niota, Tennessee.

Dear Son.....the letter stated....."Vote for Suffrage and don't keep them in doubt, I noticed that some of the speeches against Suffrage were very bitter, I have been watching to see how you stood, but have not seen anything yet.....Don't forget to be a good boy.....With Lots of Love - Mama."

When the role call came to him, Harry Thomas Burn Sr. Voted To Ratify.....his single vote ended 72 years of painful struggle. The 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was now law.

Burn later responded to attacks on his integrity and honor by inserting a personal statement into the Tennessee House Journal explaining his decision to cast the vote for Suffrage.

"I know that mothers advice is always safest for a Boy to follow.....and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification."

On November 2nd 1920 for the first time in American history eight million American women went to the polls and exercised their right to vote in prescient's all over America. Thomas Jefferson had proclaimed

Equality as the bedrock of American Government, but it took 144 years for women finally to achieve full citizenship in the United States of America.

And sadly.....the two women who had fought hardest and longest for women's rights...**Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony** had not lived long enough to cast a ballot for themselves.

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an unlikely revolutionary, she was born in the finest house in Johnstown N.Y. in 1815, eight of eleven children. At age 15 Elizabeth demanded to continue her education at Union College, the school her late brother had attended, but in 1830 no college in America would admit a female student. In any case her father was against it.....too much education would discourage the right kind of suitors Judge Cady believed. He also believed it would make it more difficult for his daughter to conform to what would come to be called the Cult of True Womanhood.

Elizabeth's father finally relented and allowed her to attend the female seminary near Troy, N.Y. run by a pioneer in women's education.....Emma Willard, who offer a serious and rigorous curriculum. She graduated in 1833 and soon began spending much of her time at the home of her wealthy and very progressive cousin, Gerrit Smith.....he was and enthusiastic supporter of every kind of reform, Temperance, Vegetarianism, Indian Rights, but especially abolition. In Smith's parlor Elizabeth met slaves hiding out on their way to Canada, listened to endless talk of politics and radical reform, and delighted in offering her own opinions as well. While visiting at her cousin's Elizabeth met and fell in love with a tall, dark slender abolitionist named Henry Brewster Stanton whom her father greatly deplored because of his abolitionist politics, but they were married anyway on May 10, 1840. Elizabeth insisted on two changes in the ceremony.....she struck the word "**obey**"..... hers was a marriage between equals and she kept her own name, henceforth she would not be known as Mrs. Henry Stanton but as.....Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Four years after Elizabeth Cady Stanton's birth **Susan Brownell Anthony** was born the second of seven children on February 15, 1820 on her father's farm near Adams, Massachusetts. Her mother, Lucy Reed was a Baptist..... Whose hard work and selfless devotion to others set the example her daughter would follow all her life. Her father Daniel Anthony was a prosperous mill owner and a Quaker so devout that toys, music and games were all barred from his house for they may distract the children from what was called the Inner Light....the God that lived within everyone's soul.

The Quakers though austere, believed men and women equal before God. Susan's own Aunt was a Quaker Preacher. This particular faith gave Susan a sensibility and an understanding of the world that was so far beyond what other people had at the time. When Susan complained that her teacher (male) refused to allow her to study long division with the boys.....her father pulled her out of public school altogether and started his own home school for his children, then eventually sent Susan off to a boarding school in Philadelphia.....he wanted his daughter to get a serious and equal education.

During her early years Susan took a job that was just opening to women, teaching school. As her confidence and skills grew so did the opportunities and she was eventually ask to head the female department at the Kanna Joe Harry academy near Albany, N.Y. She delighted in earning her own living, loved being a teacher and came to value her independence above all else. Over the years Susan Anthony would have her share of suitors.....but in the end would turn them all away.

Two days after they were married in May 1840 Henry and Elizabeth Cady Stanton travelled to London to the first World's anti-slavery convention, they were part of a large delegation of men and women that included some of the most prominent abolitionist in America, Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison. But the female abolitionist quickly discovered they were not welcome. Those who insisted on attending the convention were forced to sat in a segregated screened section and were forbidden to speak or vote. Wendell Phillips and Garrison were outraged and refused to participate in the convention but sat instead in the screened area with the women.

This was a defining moment in the young life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as she experienced first hand the connection between the fight for the rights for slaves and the fight for the rights of women. She came to the realization of the need for someone to fight for both. Elizabeth spent the rest of the convention sitting behind the screen next to the most celebrated of all the women delegates.....LUCRETIA MOTT, Mott was a Quaker Minister from Philadelphia who had already helped established the first female anti-slavery society in the world. She was so committed to her cause that she refused to wear cotton or serve sugar at her table because both depended on the labor of slaves. Elizabeth had never met anyone like her. As the convention neared its conclusion Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott resolved to hold a convention as soon as they returned home to America and to form a society to advocate the rights of women.

Anthony, after ten years of teaching had grown bored and dissatisfied. At 29 her future seemed hopelessly constricted. Her father reached out to her and encouraged her to return home to help manage the family farm in Rochester, New York. During the 1840s Western New York had become a hotbed for religious radicalism and social and political reforms of every kind. When she arrived home she found that her father's house was a veritable meeting place for anti-slave and temperance leaders. Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, John Brown to name a few. Inspired by the example of her fathers visitors, moved by their passion, Susan B. Anthony determined against all odds to see if she, a single woman, couldn't find a way to work full time as a "REFORMER".

Susan B. Anthony began her Activism in the Temperance Movement.....as this was viewed as a primary cause of domestic violence, the loss of household income and the destruction of family order and cohesiveness. She soon became consumed in the Anti-Slavery movement as she began to meet some of the leading women in the movement and learned how to organize meetings in small towns, circulate petitions and inspire others to join the movement. In spite of the many challenges and set-backs, Susan B. Anthony was convinced this was her life's calling.

1848 was a year of Revolution.....In Paris mobs toppled the King of France, Rome declared its a Republic and drove the Pope out of the Vatican, There were violent uprisings in Prague, Berlin, Vienna, Venice, and Warsaw. In London a German journalist named Karl Marc called upon workers of the world to unite against their masters.....but in America on July 11, 1848 in Seneca Falls New York a brief notice in the county Courier signaled the start of a revolution with more lasting consequences than any of the others.....

"Women's Rights Convention: A convention to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of Women will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N.Y. on Wednesday and Thursday the 19th and 20th of July current, commencing at 10 o'clock a.m."

No such meeting had ever taken place before in the history of the United States and perhaps the world. It was the brain child of five women, 4 were Quakers and the fifth and youngest was a 33 year old new comer to town.....Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The object of the convention, Stanton remembered, was to inaugurate nothing less than a rebellion, to overthrow the customs and laws that had kept women powerless for centuries.

In the middle of the 19th century women were by custom barred from the pulpit and the professions, prevented from attending college and those who dared speak in public were thought indecent. By law married women were prohibited from owning or inheriting property. In fact wives were the property of their husbands entitled by law to her wages and her body. "NO RIGHTS"

No women could serve on a jury and most were considered incompetent to testify.....and the ballot by which women might have voted to improve themselves was denied to them by law. Nowhere in America nowhere in the world did women have the right to vote. But in 1848 a young wife and mother was determined to change all that.

Initially Stanton and four other women met over tea at the home of Jean and Richard Hunt to discuss the structure of the convention, how it would be organized and how to make known their plans for the convention to women everywhere. After much discussion they finally decided to draft a statement for the convention attendees to consider. Stanton drafted the statement.....**The Declaration of Rights and Sentiments** is what they called it, as it was modeled in the form and style of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

And now the first women's rights convention in history began at 10am on the morning of July 19th, 1848 at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York. That day, only women were allowed to attend, but on the 20th the convention was open to all.....and more than 300 women and men filed into the Chapel, shopkeepers and clergy, farmers and millworkers, wives and mothers whom at the end of the convention would be ask to vote up or down Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments".

As the convention moved towards its conclusion.....Elizabeth Cady Stanton stood at the podium one final time to present her "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments"Excerpts

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course"

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal"

"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed..... but when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled".

These declarations jolted the people at the convention, the people of the country and still resounds today.

At the end 68 women and 32 men affixed their signatures to the **"Declaration of Rights and Sentiments"**.

Stanton then offered eleven additional resolutions for the convention to ratify.....ten passed without dissent, the last was the most revolutionary.....It demanded that women be given the **Right to Vote!**

This one demand threatened to undermine the entire convention,.....even Lucretia Mott was concerned, Lizzy she commented, addressing Stanton, thou will make the whole convention ridiculous.....But the 33 year old Elizabeth Cady Stanton would not back down...."The Right to Vote is Ours...Have it we must, Use it we will"

But privately she feared that she would be unable to persuade the crowd to rally to her cause. Then a man in the audience asked to be recognized.....he rose to his feet.....it was the former slave and abolitionist orator, Frederick Douglass. **"Without the vote he expounded, women will be unable to change the laws that have treated them so unjustly. All that distinguishes man as an intelligent and accountable being is equally true of woman.....and if that government only is just which governs by the free consent of the governed, there can be no reason in the world for denying to women the exercise of the elected franchise, our doctrine is that Right is of no Sex"**

Douglass' eloquence helped to carry the day....The resolution supporting the woman's right to vote passed.....and the convention adjourned.

Stanton's declaration galvanized small groups of women and sympathetic men all over the country.

The Seneca Falls declaration had come 72 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, It would be another 72 hard fought years before ratification of the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote. **BUT THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMENS RIGHTS HAD BEGUN!!!!**

The Seneca Fall convention made Elizabeth Cady Stanton famous....but the demands of marriage and motherhood kept her close to home. Yet if the momentum of the new movement was to be sustained in a wider world she would need help. On Tuesday May 13, 1851 on a street corner in Seneca Falls New York Stanton was introduced to a tall slender young woman who had come to town to hear and anti-slavery address by William Lloyd Garrison.....her name was **Susan B. Anthony**.

They could not have been more different....Stanton was born to wealth and comfort, married and the mother of seven children; she was witty and hospitable, fond of good food and fine clothes....but she was also an uncompromising revolutionary. A many ideaed woman her daughter called her..... who dared to proclaim to the world that women should have the right to vote.

Anthony was plain spoken, single minded, disciplined born a Quaker she chose not to marry, she was a brilliant strategist, willing to tack to the left or the right and by so doing she could steer the women's suffrage movement closer to its goal. Though she never held public office she would become the nation's first great woman politician.....Aunt Susan to a whole generation of young women.

Despite their differences the two would work together for more than half a century to better the lives of women everywhere. Their personal stories would illuminate universal qualities of love and friendship, loyalty and betrayal, courage and compromise, failure and success and the very meaning of independence itself.

In 1881 Stanton described their unique relationship....."While she is slow and analytical in composition I am rapid and synthetic, I am a better writer, she the better critic, she supplied the facts and statistics, I the philosophy and rhetoric and together we have made arguments that have stood unshaken by the storms of thirty long years.....Arguments that no man has answered" **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**

These two courageous and unyielding women became the face, the voice and the legs of the Suffrage Movement. While Stanton, less mobile due to family constraints used her pen and incredible intellect to drum out constant articles and publications amplifying the movement, Anthony would crisscross the state of New York and the country making speeches and organizing meeting and rallies in every city, village and hamlet where two or more women would gather and listen.

Everywhere they went they were vilified as heretics, and viciously attacked in the press.....when their Equal Pay proposal came to a vote at a New York state teachers convention in Rochester, it was soundly defeated.....Most of the Women voted against it.

One prominent American newspaper editor, poet and abolitionist described their activities as.....

"These two women, sitting together in their parlors, have been diligent forgers of all manner of projectiles, from fireworks to thunderbolts, and have hurled them with unexpected explosion into the mist of all manner of assemblies, sometimes to the pleasant surprise and half welcome of the members; more often to the bewilderment and prostration of numerous victims; and in a few single instances, to the gnashing of angry men's teeth.....this noisemaking twain are two sticks of a drum, keeping up what Daniel Webster called, "The Rub-A-Dub-Dub of Agitation. " Theodore Tilton

In 1868 Stanton and Anthony founded and organized the **National Women's Suffrage Association**.....commenting "We will forever divorce ourselves from the counsel of men".

In 1873, frustrated with their limited success in working for change through State Houses, they re-directed their focus to a new strategy, the Courts. In June of that year a carefully orchestrated plan was launched nationwide for select women to present themselves before voting registrars and demand to be registered. Once denied, they would file suit in the courts against the registrar.

When Anthony went before the voting registrar in Rochester, New York, to her surprise the young man was so nervous and shaken that he complied and registered Anthony and those who accompanied her. Amazingly she was allowed to vote in the upcoming election; however she was arrested three weeks later and charged with breaking New York state law, which prohibited women from casting a vote in an election. After the trial, an angry judge set aside the jury of twelve men as he opted to enter an immediate verdict of "Guilty" against Anthony. A fine of one hundred dollars was assessed.....Anthony proclaimed "I will never pay a penny of it"and she did not.

During the next several years Stanton and Anthony worked ceaselessly on a host of women's rights issues, Temperance and divorce reform, co-education and married women's property rights, dress reform and equal pay for equal work. In January of 1878, after more than three years of intense efforts they finally convinced one Senator, Aaron A Sargent of California to introduce legislation before the United States Congress....Giving Women the Right to Vote.....It was soundly voted down. This legislation would be introduced again before every session of congress for the next forty years.

By 1888 Stanton and Anthony were encouraged by the knowledge that after forty years although the ultimate goal was yet not attained.....The Movement had achieved measured success, four states and territories had granted women the right to vote (Wyoming, Utah, Colorado and Idaho). At the time of Anthony's birth no woman was welcome at any American college or university, now women freely attended eight out of ten colleges, universities and professional schools, there were now women doctors and clergy, women could own property and keep their earnings, could sue in the courts and testify before a jury, and in a few states they could serve as jurors and practice law.....

In the spring of 1902 Susan B. Anthony visited her old friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton at her home in New York City. Weary and frail they talked of old times and discussed new strategies for keeping the movement alive. As she departed Anthony commented that she would return in November to help Stanton celebrate her 87th birthday. On the morning of October 27th 1902 there was a quite knock on the front door of Anthony's Rochester home. A servant brought her a telegram announcing the death of her old friend on the night of October 26, 1902. Anthony sat quietly in her room for several hours stirring into open space as tears filled her eyes. Her thoughts invariably wandered back to a secret pact agreed upon between the two years ago.....THE MOVEMENT MUST GO ON!!

In the late winter of 1906, assisted by her niece Anna Howard Shaw, Anthony 86, made her way to the podium before a sea of women at the National/American Suffrage Association Annual Convention in New York City. Without speaking a word, her simple presence before the group sparked a standing ovation that lasted that lasted for ten minutes. This would be her last opportunity to encourage them to continue the fight. In her closing remarks she exclaimed.....

"I never saw that great woman, Mary Wallstone Craft, but I have read her eloquent and unanswerable arguments on behalf of the Liberty of Womankind. I have met and known most of the progressive women who came after her, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth

Cady Stanton, a long galaxy of great women. I wish I could name everyone, but with such women consecrating their lives.....FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE”.

Susan B. Anthony died at 12:40AM on the morning of Tuesday March 13, 1906. Her niece, the Reverend Anna Howard Shaw delivered the eulogy, concluding with a vision of encouragement....

“There is no death for such as she, that which seems death to our unseeing eyes, is to her translation, her work will not be finished, nor will her last word be spoken, while there remains a wrong to be righted or a fettered life to be freed in all the earth. You do well to strew her Bier with plams of victory, and to crown her with unfading laurel.....for never did more victorious hero enter into rest”.

It would take the American women fourteen more years, to realize the dream of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Fourteen years in which the women of Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Norway, The Soviet Union, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia all won the vote.

So, in many, many ways, it is altogether fitting that on the fateful morning of August 18, 1920 in the chambers of the Tennessee State Legislature that a young Man emboldened by his Mother and surrounded by angry adversaries reached into his lapel and removed a Red Rose and held high the Yellow Rose of Support that would end dreams deferred and elevate the Woman of America to Full Citizenship.

But in the words of Sojourner Truth.....”**THE STRUGGLE AIN’T OVER YET”**

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